

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5286

FULL VETO As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Regarding exemptions from the WorkFirst program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Regala, Hargrove and Kohl-Welles).

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections
House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services
House Committee on Health & Human Services Appropriations

Background: WorkFirst is Washington's program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Under WorkFirst, recipients of public assistance are assessed prior to referral to job search activities. Information obtained through the assessment is used to develop an individual responsibility plan that includes an employment goal; a plan for obtaining employment as quickly as possible; and a description of services available to enable the recipient to obtain and keep employment.

Unless a good cause exemption applies, TANF recipients must be engaged in work or work activities as a condition of continued eligibility. Under Washington law, a parent with a child under the age of one year has a "good cause" reason for failure to participate in a WorkFirst program. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) may require any recipient with a child under one year to participate in mental health, alcohol, or drug treatment, domestic violence services or parenting education or skills training for up to 20 hours per week, if such treatment, services, or training is indicated by its comprehensive assessment.

The good cause exemption for a parent with a child under the age of one year is limited to a maximum of 12 months over the parent's lifetime.

Summary: A parent claiming a good cause exemption from WorkFirst participation must not be required to participate in any activities during the first 90 days following the birth of a child.

DSHS can not reduce the grant to a single parent household claiming the good cause exemption due to sanction for failing to participate in activities related to mental health treatment, alcohol or drug treatment, domestic violence services, or parenting education or

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parenting skills training. DSHS may assign or seek out a protective payee when a parent in need of mental health or substance abuse treatment refuses to engage in treatment. DSHS must also continue its efforts to engage parents in appropriate supportive services and treatment programs.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	0	
House	60	37	(House amended)
House	57	40	(House reconsidered)
Senate	41	7	(Senate concurred)